

# Say Goodbye to Sore Joints and Sleepless Nights

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The relationship between sleep and pain is complicated. Sore joints can keep you up at night, and lack of sleep can make you more sensitive to pain. In fact, up to 90% of adults with chronic joint pain are unable to sleep well, according to the Cleveland Clinic.

You may have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep if your hips, knees, or shoulders ache due to arthritis, osteoporosis, or fibromyalgia.

**Even if you do drift off, you may be spending fewer hours in the deep stages of sleep that restore your body and mind.** Lack of sleep can also contribute to many other health issues, including obesity, diabetes, and heart conditions.

Fortunately, there are simple behavioral changes that can help you to manage the discomfort and sleep more peacefully. Try these home remedies and work with your doctor to find relief.

## **Steps to Take at Bedtime:**

- 1. Change positions.** Try sleeping on your unaffected side with your knees drawn up. Place a small pillow between your knees to take pressure off your hips. If you lie on your back, put a thin pillow under your shoulders.
- 2. Wear a sling.** Protect an aching shoulder by immobilizing it with a sling. Putting a pillow under your armpit can help too.
- 3. Buy a new mattress.** A firm mattress is usually preferable. You need something

that will cushion your body and support your contours.

4. **Check your bedroom. Sleep hygiene is especially important if you have joint issues.** Darken your bedroom and block out distracting noises. Keep electronic devices out of your bedroom or turn them off at least 2 hours before retiring.
5. **Maintain a consistent schedule.** As much as possible, go to bed and rise at the same time each day. Resist the urge to sleep in, even on weekends and holidays.
6. **Get out of bed.** If you can't sleep, it may be better to get up and do something boring until you're sleepy again. **As a bonus, moving around can reduce joint pain because it decreases swelling and increases lubrication.**

#### **Steps to Take Anytime:**

1. **Contact your doctor.** Talk with your doctor if pain lasts more than a few days or recurs frequently. Seek medical care right away if you're experiencing severe and unusual pain or you have additional symptoms like weight loss or fever.
2. **Take medication as directed.** Your doctor can explain how to take over-the-counter or prescription pain relievers or sleep aids safely. That way you can reduce your risk of side effects or becoming dependent on drugs to sleep.
3. **Limit napping.** Taking naps to fight daytime fatigue can backfire if they interfere with your falling asleep at bedtime. **Experiment until you find what works for you.**
4. **Drink responsibly. Alcohol makes you feel drowsy, but actually interferes with sleep.** You're more likely to wake up frequently during the night if you

drink too much.

**5. Manage your weight.** Carrying around excess pounds creates more stress on your joints. Fill up on vegetables, fruits, and other whole foods that have more nutrients and fewer calories than processed items.

**6. Exercise more.** Physical activity helps in several ways. In addition to helping you burn calories, it may lift your spirits and increase your tolerance for physical discomfort.

**7. Try therapy.** Many adults have found relief for insomnia through cognitive behavioral training (CBT). Working with a therapist can help you identify thoughts and actions that disrupt your sleep, and learn how to adopt healthier substitutes.

Living with aching joints is challenging, but a positive attitude will help you to manage your pain and develop strategies that enhance your sleep. By taking control, you'll enjoy more satisfying sleep and greater comfort around the clock.